



# Hot Off The Press

LATEST STATISTICS FROM STATISTICS NEW ZEALAND

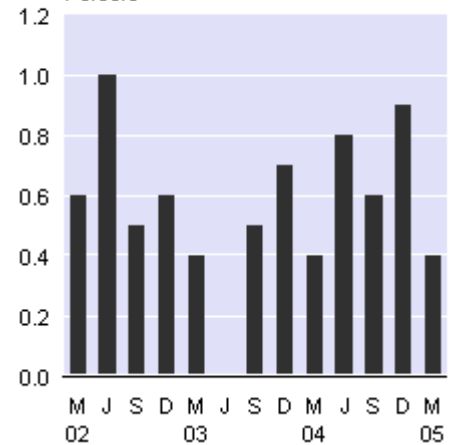
Embargoed until 10:45am – 15 April 2005

## Consumers Price Index March 2005 quarter

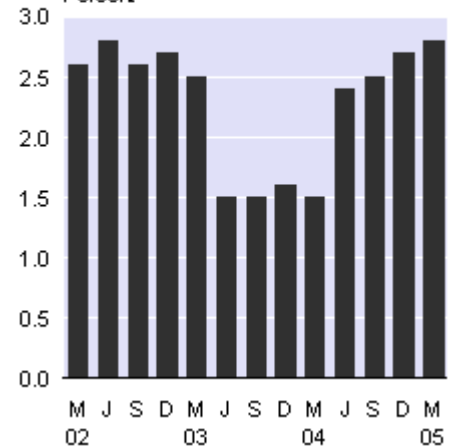
### Highlights

- **The Consumers Price Index (CPI) rose 0.4 percent** in the March 2005 quarter.
- **Housing prices rose 1.2 percent**, reflecting higher prices for the purchase and construction of new dwellings.
- **Food prices rose 0.7 percent**, mainly influenced by higher prices for grocery food, soft drinks and confectionery.
- **Recreation and education prices rose 1.5 percent**, mainly due to increased education and child care prices.
- **Transportation prices fell 1.7 percent**, reflecting lower prices for international air travel.
- **The CPI rose 2.8 percent** from the March 2004 quarter to the March 2005 quarter.

**Consumers Price Index**  
Quarterly percentage change  
Percent



**Consumers Price Index**  
Annual percentage change  
Percent



Brian Pink  
Government Statistician

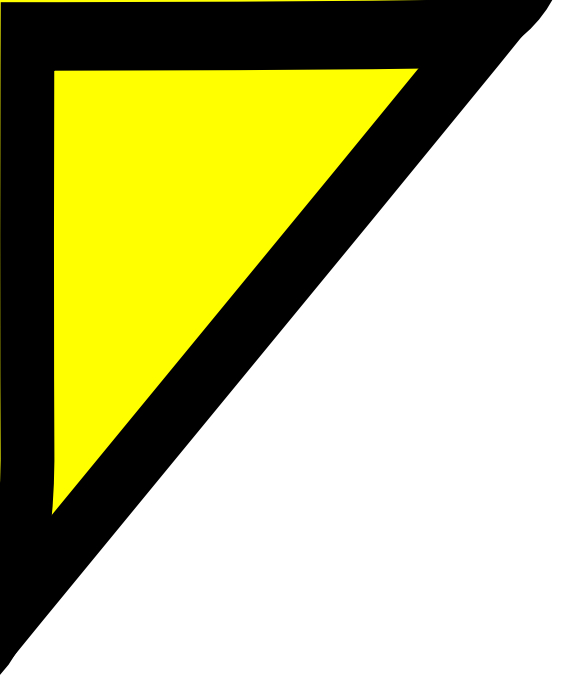
15 April 2005  
Cat 64.902 Set 04/05 – 177

There is a companion Media Release published – [Consumers Price Index: March 2005 quarter](#).

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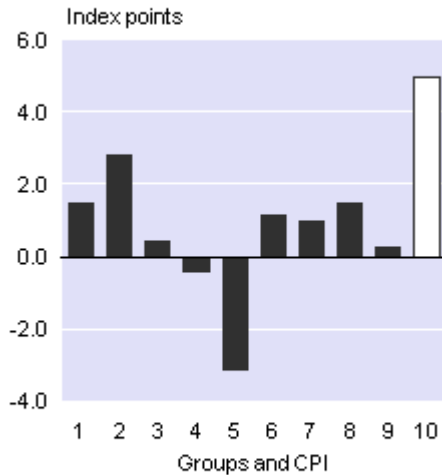
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## Points Contribution to Consumers Price Index

March 2005 quarter



1 Food; 2 Housing; 3 Household operation; 4 Apparel; 5 Transportation; 6 Tobacco and alcohol; 7 Personal and health care; 8 Recreation and education; 9 Credit services; 10 All groups.

## Distribution of item-level movements

The table below outlines the distribution of price movements in the December 2004 and March 2005 quarters. The CPI has been partitioned into those national item-level indexes that increased, showed no change, or decreased.

### Distribution of Item-level Index Movements

National Item-level Index Movements	September 2004 quarter to December 2004 quarter	December 2004 quarter to March 2005 quarter
<b>Increase in price</b>		
Number of items	352	350
Percentage of all items	52.4	52.1
Percentage of expenditure weight	65.0	63.5
Index points contribution	15.8	13.8
Weighted average price increase (percent)	2.1	1.9
<b>No change in price</b>		
Number of items	89	126
Percentage of all items	13.2	18.8
Percentage of expenditure weight	7.2	12.4
<b>Decrease in price</b>		
Number of items	231	196
Percentage of all items	34.4	29.2
Percentage of expenditure weight	27.8	24.1
Index points contribution	-5.6	-8.9
Weighted average price decrease (percent)	1.8	3.2

The distribution of item-level movements shows that:

- In the March 2005 quarter, the expenditure weight of items that increased in price was significantly greater than the expenditure weight of items that decreased in price.
- From the December 2004 quarter to the March 2005 quarter, the expenditure weight of items that had increased in price fell, the expenditure weight of items that decreased in price also fell, while the expenditure weight of those items that had no change in price rose.
- From the December 2004 quarter to the March 2005 quarter, the weighted average price decrease rose and the weighted average price increase fell.

This has resulted in the CPI moving from a 0.9 percent increase in the December 2004 quarter to a 0.4 percent increase in the March 2005 quarter.

## **CPI annual movement**

The CPI rose 2.8 percent from the March 2004 quarter to the March 2005 quarter. This follows rises of 2.7 percent in the year to December 2004 and 2.5 percent in the year to September 2004.

Of the nine groups in the CPI, eight recorded annual increases from the March 2004 quarter. The most significant upward contributions came from the housing group (up 5.4 percent). Less significant upward contributions came from the tobacco and alcohol, transportation, household operation, food, personal and health care, recreation and education, and credit services groups. The only downward contribution came from the apparel group.

The annual increase in the CPI was strongly influenced by price increases in the purchase and construction of new dwellings (up 7.2 percent) and electricity (up 9.7 percent). Significant annual decreases came from household appliances and equipment (down 4.6 percent), and international air travel (down 2.8 percent).

## **CPI all groups tradable and non-tradable component series**

In the March 2005 quarter, the non-tradable component increased 1.1 percent, following a 1.1 percent increase in the December 2004 quarter. The tradable component decreased 0.5 percent in the March quarter, following an increase of 0.7 percent in the December quarter.

From the March 2004 quarter to the March 2005 quarter, the non-tradable component increased 4.2 percent and the tradable component increased 0.8 percent.

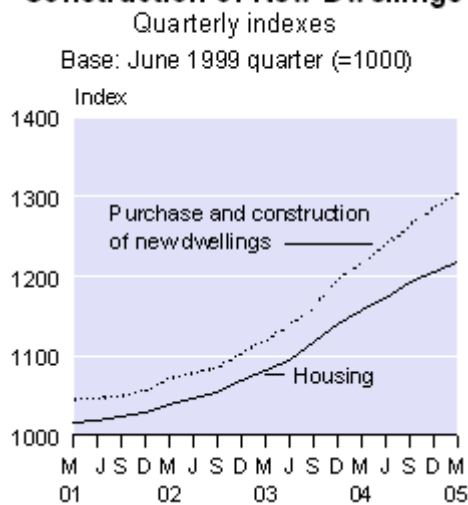
## **Housing**

The housing group increased 1.2 percent in the March 2005 quarter, following increases of 1.1 percent and 1.6 percent in the December and September 2004 quarters, respectively.

Prices for the purchase and construction of new dwellings increased 1.5 percent in the March 2005 quarter, following increases of 1.7 percent and 1.9 percent in the December and September 2004 quarters respectively. Construction prices have increased for 24 consecutive quarters. In the March 2005 quarter, 52 percent of surveyed construction prices rose. Respondents were asked to indicate reasons for any reported changes in their construction prices. Of respondents reporting increases in the March 2005 quarter, 96 percent cited higher prices for construction components, 78 percent cited increased subcontractors' charges, 72 percent cited rises in the cost of fittings and 61 percent cited rising labour costs.

From the March 2004 quarter to the March 2005 quarter, housing prices increased 5.4 percent. The most significant contributions came from higher construction prices (up 7.2 percent), rents (up 2.2 percent) and real estate agent fees (up 12.6 percent).

### Housing Group and Purchase and Construction of New Dwellings



### Food

The food group increased 0.7 percent in the March 2005 quarter. This follows an increase of 0.6 percent in the December 2004 quarter and a decrease of 0.2 percent in the September quarter. The most significant upward contribution to food prices came from the grocery food, soft drinks and confectionery subgroup (up 0.8 percent).

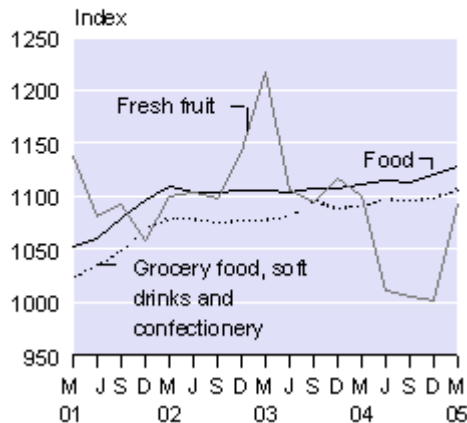
Within the food subgroups, the most significant upward contributions came from fresh fruit (up 9.1 percent), and cereals and cereal products (up 1.5 percent). This was partly offset by a 2.7 percent decrease for fresh vegetables.

From the March 2004 quarter to the March 2005 quarter, food prices increased 1.5 percent. Major contributions to the increase came from dairy products (up 5.1 percent), ready-to-eat-food (up 3.7 percent), and beef (up 8.1 percent). A major downward contribution came from fresh vegetables (down 6.0 percent).

## Food Group and Selected Items

Quarterly indexes

Base: June 1999 quarter (=1000)



## Recreation and education

The recreation and education group increased 1.5 percent in the March 2005 quarter. This follows increases of 0.8 percent in the December 2004 quarter and 0.2 percent in the September quarter. The most significant upward contribution to recreation and education prices came from the education and child care subgroup (up 3.7 percent).

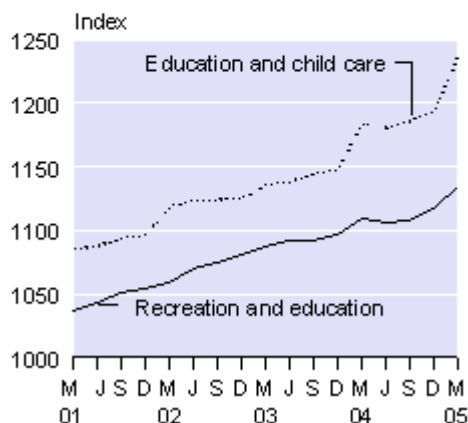
Within the recreation and education subgroups, the most significant upward contributions came from tertiary tuition (up 4.1 percent), hotel and motel accommodation (up 3.6 percent), and primary and secondary school tuition (up 8.1 percent).

From the March 2004 quarter to the March 2005 quarter recreation and education prices increased 2.3 percent. Major contributions to this increase came from tuition and examinations (up 4.4 percent), newspapers, magazines and books (up 2.8 percent), and leisure and recreation services (up 2.2 percent).

## Recreation and Education Group and Education and Child Care

Quarterly indexes

Base: June 1999 quarter (=1000)



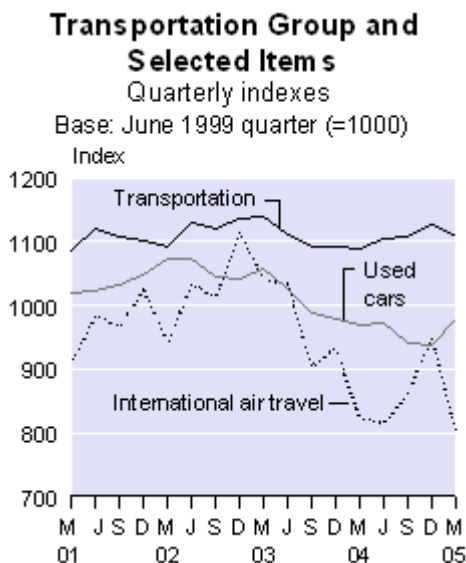
## Transportation

The transportation group decreased 1.7 percent in the March 2005 quarter, following rises of 1.8 percent in the December 2004 quarter and 0.5 percent in September quarter.

The most significant downward contribution to the transportation group came from international air travel (down 15.8 percent). Fares for international air travel usually fall at this time of year. However the latest quarterly fall is larger than decreases typically seen in March quarters. The March decreases are due to seasonal patterns. If prices for international air travel had not changed from the December 2004 quarter, then the CPI would have increased 0.9 percent.

The most significant upward contribution to the transportation group came from higher prices for used cars (up 4.5 percent).

From the March 2004 quarter to the March 2005 quarter, the transportation group rose 1.9 percent. This was mainly driven by higher prices for petrol (up 7.7 percent).



## Other groups

Less significant increases in the March 2005 quarter were recorded for tobacco and alcohol (up 1.1 percent), personal and health care (up 1.1 percent), household operation (up 0.2 percent) and credit services (up 3.7 percent). The apparel group recorded a decrease of 0.8 percent.

Together, these groups contributed 2.38 index points to the CPI. The most significant upward contributions within these groups came from health care (up 1.3 percent), cigarettes and tobacco (up 2.6 percent), and energy (up 1.3 percent). Cigarettes and tobacco prices were subject to the annual increase in excise duties, effective from 1 December 2004.

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## **Technical notes**

### **What the Consumers Price Index measures**

The Consumers Price Index (CPI) measures the rate of price change of goods and services purchased by households. The CPI All Groups Index is prepared quarterly. The food group is the only commodity group of the CPI for which an index is prepared each month.

### **Expression base**

The CPI has an expression base of June 1999 quarter (=1000). The June 1999 quarter was the final quarter calculated and published on the previous base of December 1993 quarter (=1000).

### **Changes in methodology**

The total estimated expenditure used in the creation of the weights in 2002 is \$58.6 billion, compared with total estimated expenditure in 1999 of \$44.2 billion, an increase of 33 percent. This is due in part to inflation, population growth and growth in real expenditure, and in a larger part to both the introduction of integrated weighting in the Household Economic Survey (HES) and better independent estimates. Integrated weighting is a method of adjusting the statistical output of a survey to match population benchmarks. In particular, it takes account of undercoverage in the survey of specified population groups. This difference should be kept in mind when examining weight changes as it can have unexpected effects on the relativities between the weights. Consumer expenditure in some areas may have remained relatively static while the share of the overall weight could decline a large amount. Household numbers too can have an impact. The number of HES households has increased from 1.16 million in 1997 to 1.37 million in 2001 (17.9 percent). Only 5.0 percent of this increase is real growth in household numbers, with a larger part of the change being due to the benchmarking used as part of the integrated weighting. Independent expenditure estimates calculated as total expenditure aggregates are divided by larger estimated household numbers, producing smaller relative weights.

Aside from changes in consumer expenditure and household numbers recorded in the HES, changes in independent estimates and household numbers have an effect. Data in CPI weights comes from a variety of sources independent of the main source of weights (HES), including retail trade statistics, the census, building consents, data from the national accounts and a variety of government and industry sources.

### **Determining the effect of a specified change in a lower-level index**

As the CPI and FPI have been re-weighted, but not re-expressed, in the June 2002 quarter, the method used to determine the effect that a specified change in a lower-level index would have on a higher-level index to which it contributes, needs to be modified for the September 2002 quarter and subsequent quarters.

The index points effect on a higher-level index of a specified percentage change in a lower-level index which contributes to the higher-level index can be determined by following these steps:

1. Adjust the lower-level index for the previous period ( $I_{n-1,low}$ ) by the specified percentage change ( $PC_{n,low}$ ) to derive the index number for the current period:  

$$I_{n,low} = I_{n-1,low} \times (1 + (PC_{n,low} / 100))$$
2. Calculate the index points effect on the higher-level index of the specified change in the lower-level index:  

$$PE(\text{low on high}) = I_{Jun-02,high} \times (W_{Jun-02,low} / W_{Jun-02,high}) \times ((I_{n,low} - I_{n-1,low}) / I_{Jun-02,low})$$
3. Calculate the percentage change in the higher-level index that would be caused by the specified change in the lower-level index:  

$$PC_{n,high} = (((I_{n-1,high} + PE(\text{low on high})) / I_{n-1,high}) - 1) \times 100$$

**Where:**

$I$  = index

$n-1$  = period  $n-1$

$n$  = period  $n$ , where  $n$  is the September 2002 quarter or a subsequent quarter (CPI), or the July 2002 month or a subsequent month (FPI)

Jun-02 = June 2002 quarter (CPI) or June 2002 month (FPI)

low = lower-level index

high = higher-level index

$W$  = expenditure weight, expressed as a percentage of the all groups (CPI) or group (FPI) index

$PC$  = percentage change

$PE$  = index points effect

low on high = lower-level index on higher-level index

Note, the period in the terms  $I_{Jun-02,high}$ ,  $I_{Jun-02,low}$ ,  $W_{Jun-02,low}$  and  $W_{Jun-02,high}$  used in step 2 above remains constant (June 2002 quarter for the CPI and June 2002 month for the FPI), irrespective of what periods  $n$  and  $n-1$  are.

**Example:**

The effect that a 5.0 percent increase in the petrol index (which has a weight of 3.12 percent) from the June 2002 quarter to the September 2002 quarter would have on the all groups CPI index can be calculated as follows:

1. Increase the petrol index for the June 2002 quarter by 5.0 percent to derive the index number for the September 2002 quarter:  

$$I_{Sep-02,low} = I_{Jun-02,low} \times (1 + (PC_{Sep-02,low} / 100)) = 1316 \times (1 + (5 / 100)) = 1381.8$$
2. Calculate the index points effect on the all groups CPI index of the 5.0 percent increase in the petrol index:  

$$PE(\text{low on high}) = I_{Jun-02,high} \times (W_{Jun-02,low} / W_{Jun-02,high}) \times ((I_{Sep-02,low} - I_{Jun-02,low}) / I_{Jun-02,low}) = 1082 \times (3.12 / 100) \times ((1381.8 - 1316) / 1316) = 1.69 \text{ index points.}$$
3. Calculate the percentage change in the all groups CPI index that would be caused by a 5.0 percent change in the petrol index:  

$$PC_{Sep-02,high} = (((I_{Jun-02,high} + PE(\text{low on high})) / I_{Jun-02,high}) - 1) \times 100 = (((1082 + 1.69) / 1082) - 1) \times 100 = 0.2 \text{ percent.}$$

**Distribution of item-level index movements**

The Distribution of Item-level Index Movements table in the Commentary of this release gives additional information on the distribution of price movements recorded for the current quarter's CPI. The analytical statistics in the table give an indication of how widespread price changes are and their relative magnitude when compared with previous quarters.

The weighted average price increase and decrease uses unrounded index numbers for the previous and current periods to calculate item-level price movements from the previous period, and these are weighted using previous period expenditure weights. The previous period expenditure weight for an item is calculated by projecting base period expenditure weights by the price change for the item from the base period to the previous period.

Movements based on unrounded index numbers are used to determine whether items have increased, showed no change or decreased in price. Previous period expenditure weights are used to indicate the proportion of the expenditure weight that has increased, showed no change or decreased.

## **Trend measures of price level change**

The CPI captures the broad pattern of price change over the long term, but over shorter horizons the trend in price change may be masked by one-off events.

In particular, the CPI:

- can be subject to temporary influences, such as adverse climatic conditions affecting the prices of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- is influenced by other supply disturbances, which, while they affect the cost of living, do not directly affect the underlying inflationary pressures in the economy. For example, supply disturbances for petrol or electricity can have a large impact on the CPI in the short term, and
- some items are subject to seasonality, such as international air fares and rental car hire, which may induce volatile short-term price behaviour.

In order to provide an indication of the trend in the CPI over time, alternative statistics can be calculated that act as a filter for some of the short-term disturbances that may affect the CPI. These alternative statistics are sometimes known as trend measures of price level change, and attempt to isolate the more persistent component of general price level changes.

Statistics New Zealand acknowledges that there is no single statistical series that is always a good guide to the trend in price level change. Several series can be constructed, and to this end we have produced various trimmed mean measures (5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 percent trims), and a weighted median measure (the 50th percentile). Four other weighted percentile measures have also been produced (the 10th, 25th, 75th and 90th weighted percentiles), primarily to highlight the distribution of price changes within a particular time period. Where the distribution of price movements is positively skewed, the weighted median movement will tend to lie below the CPI movement. Where the distribution of price movements is negatively skewed, the weighted median movement will tend to lie above the CPI movement.

The Reserve Bank of New Zealand has been producing a 10 percent trimmed mean and a weighted median for some time. Largely at their request, Statistics New Zealand has decided to produce a set of trend measures as analytical tools. We have broadened the range of measures, and have also used a lower level of aggregation and unrounded data in deriving them.

For detailed information regarding the methodology and compilation of trimmed means and weighted medians an information paper is available on request.

## **Treatment of selected items**

### **Excise increase for cigarettes and tobacco**

On 1 December 2004 the annual indexation of the excise duty on cigarettes and tobacco took effect. This increased the excise duty on these products by 2.536 percent based on the movement from the September 2003 quarter to the September 2004 quarter of the CPI less credit services. The prices for cigarettes and tobacco are collected monthly so the December collection of prices reflected the increase in excise. As prices are averaged\* over the three months of the quarter for inclusion in the CPI the effect of the increase in the excise duty will be spread over both the December 2004 and March 2005 quarters.

\* See Method of aggregating non-food prices from the monthly level to the quarterly level, below.

### **Seasonal effects – fresh fruit and vegetables**

For items in the fresh fruit section and fresh vegetables section that exhibit a seasonal pattern, special treatment is used to reduce the influence of normal seasonal price fluctuations. This treatment does not completely eliminate the effects of seasonal fluctuations if shifts in seasonal patterns occur. These seasonally adjusted prices are used to calculate the indexes and price movements for fresh fruit and vegetables, which are quoted in the Highlights and the Commentary sections.

## **Method of aggregating non-food prices from the monthly level to the quarterly level**

Prices are collected monthly for a number of non-food items in the CPI, including electricity, cigarettes and tobacco, alcoholic drinks and air travel. These prices are averaged over the quarter for inclusion in the CPI. The method for calculating these averages is firstly to obtain monthly regional average prices for the item by outlet-weighting the prices collected at different outlets within each region. The monthly regional average prices are used to calculate quarterly regional average prices by weighting each monthly regional average price by the number of days in the month in which it was collected. This is called day weighting. All the regions are aggregated to obtain the New Zealand quarterly index by weighting together regional price movements from the base (ie June 1999) quarter to the current quarter using the regional population weights.

In April 2002, petrol prices changed to weekly collection, usually on Fridays, after previously being collected twice monthly. The CPI petrol price index measures price changes of 91 octane petrol and 96 octane petrol. Within each CPI region, an average price per 10 litres of each of the two types of petrol is calculated from the prices surveyed each week from individual service stations. Monthly regional average prices for each of the two types of petrol are then calculated as the simple averages of the averages for the weeks within each month. Quarterly regional average prices for each of the two types of petrol are then calculated as the day-weighted averages of the averages for the three months within the quarter. Regional price movements from the base (ie June 1999) quarter to the current quarter are then weighted by the regional population weights to calculate the national petrol price index for the current quarter.

Since petrol prices are collected either 12 or 13 times within each quarter, a price change that happens after the first price collection of a quarter is reflected only partly in that quarter, with the remainder being reflected in the following quarter. This is also the case for commodities priced monthly, such as cigarettes and tobacco.

## Standard and non-standard series

From the introduction of the rebased CPI series with base June 1999 quarter (=1000), index series that contribute to the hierarchical structure of the overall CPI are known as standard series. For example, the rented dwellings index, combined with the home ownership index contribute to the housing index, which in turn contributes to the all groups index. Components of this pyramid-like structure are known as standard index series. In addition, a selection of non-standard series published in the Hot Off The Press release tables and additional series are publicly available on INFOS.

Examples of these non-standard series include:

All groups CPI less food

All groups CPI plus interest

Interest

All groups CPI – including non-seasonally adjusted fruit and vegetables.

On INFOS, the 1993-based CPI series have been given different identifiers (ie starting with CPXQ; eg CPXQ.SE9A). The CPI on the base of June 1999 quarter (=1000) has adopted the identifiers starting with CPIQ (eg CPIQ.SE9A). For periods prior to the June quarter, index numbers are unrounded, so that originally published percentage movements are preserved. A full listing of series on the base June 1999 quarter (=1000) is available on request.

## Tradable and non-tradable non-standard series

The tradable and non-tradable component series which appears in Tables 3.01, 3.02 and 3.03 allows users to decompose CPI goods and services into two components: one contains goods and services that are imported or in competition with foreign goods either in domestic or foreign markets (tradables); and the other contains goods and services that face no foreign competition (non-tradables). Movements in the tradables component (tradable inflation) demonstrate how international price movements and exchange rates are impacting on movements in consumer prices. The non-tradables component shows how domestic demand and supply conditions are affecting consumer prices.

To determine the tradable/non-tradable split, Statistics New Zealand adopted a two-stage model that built on work undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. CPI subsections were classified as tradable when exports or imports were of significant size relative to industry output. Such subsections were judged to be very likely to have significant international price pressures due to foreign competition in domestic markets, or goods and services facing competition in international markets. Items with little or no imports or exports, which would face little or no international competition, were classified as non-tradable. This represented the first stage of the two-stage model adopted by Statistics New Zealand.

The second stage involved using specified criteria to identify goods and services that may not have been appropriately classified by the above output approach. Further analysis was undertaken on those goods and services. To establish the final classification, information was considered on significant price movements, any correlation with exchange rates, supporting trade data, significant world events and the regulatory environment within which prices are set.

For detailed information regarding the methodology, an information paper is available: [Consumers Price Index Tradable and Non-tradable Series - Information Paper.](#)

## Points effect tables

Tables 8.01 and 8.02 list selected group, subgroup, section and subsection points effects and percentage changes from the previous quarter and from the same quarter of the previous year. These tables have been included to provide a broader perspective of the categories contributing to the movement in the CPI. The listed categories are not a complete list; however, each quarter the tables are reviewed to ensure that the significant contributing categories to the current quarterly movement are included. The annual data are for the same categories as the quarterly categories.

## Average retail prices in the CPI

Included in this Hot Off The Press is a selection of average retail prices for the current and previous quarter. These weighted average prices are calculated using movements of an appropriate index within the CPI and applying these movements to the base period average price. They are therefore not a statistically accurate measure of average transaction prices at the stated time, but do provide a reliable indicator for relative movements in the price levels when compared with average prices for earlier periods.

## Information paper – Implementation of the 1999 Review of the Consumers Price Index

For detailed information regarding the methodology and compilation of the June 1999 quarter rebased Consumers Price Index, an information paper titled *Implementation of the 1999 Review of the Consumers Price Index* is available.

## Pricing coverage

Prices are collected in 15 urban areas by field staff, postal surveys or from the Internet. The pricing areas are Whangarei, Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Rotorua, Napier-Hastings, New Plymouth, Wanganui, Palmerston North, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch, Timaru, Dunedin and Invercargill.

These prices are assumed to represent the price movements of goods and services across New Zealand. Prices are collected weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually depending on the expected frequency of price changes exhibited by the good or service. Weekly surveys are conducted for fresh fruit and vegetables, and motor fuels. Monthly surveys are limited to the following commodities: food, non-food groceries, electricity, gas, tobacco, alcoholic drinks, newspapers, Internet, cellphones, rental cars and domestic and international air travel. Some items are monitored throughout the quarter, eg telephone call charges. Mortgage interest is also surveyed monthly but has been excluded from the CPI calculations from the June 1999 quarter rebase.

## International comparisons of consumer price indexes

To provide a better basis for international comparisons, the Fourteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians adopted a resolution that called for countries to "provide for dissemination at the international level of an index which excludes shelter, in addition to the all-items index". This information is presented in Table 4. This data is calculated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics from information supplied by the source country.

## More information

For more information, follow the [link](#) from the Technical notes of this release on the Statistics New Zealand website.

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### Next release ...

*Consumers Price Index: June 2005 quarter* will be released on 14 July 2005.

For information on the changing face of older New Zealanders, visit <a href="http://www.stats.govt.nz/older-people">www.stats.govt.nz/older-people</a>
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## Tables

The following tables can be downloaded from the Statistics New Zealand website in Excel 97 format. If you do not have access to Excel 97 or higher, you may use the [Excel file viewer](#) to view, print and export the contents of the file.

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1. Consumers price index, food group and all groups – index numbers and percentage changes
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- 2.02. Consumers price index, groups and subgroups, percentage change from previous quarter
- 2.03. Consumers price index, groups and subgroups, percentage change from same quarter of previous year
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5. Consumers price index, weighted average retail prices of selected items
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